C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000295

SIPDIS

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TAGS: KDEM PGOV PINS PTER IZ
SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: ELECTIONS GO SMOOTHLY

REF: A. BAGHDAD 142
     ¶B. BAGHDAD 80
     ¶C. BAGHDAD 77

Classified By: PMIN Robert S. Ford. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: PRT observers visited polling centers in
four of Salah ad Din's (SaD) eight districts. The sites were
consistently well organized and secured, though screening
procedures and equipment were inconsistent. Turnout was
lower in rural areas where heads of household expected to
vote on behalf of their female relatives but were not allowed
to do so. Nevertheless, according to Iraqi Independent High
Electoral Commission (IHEC) officials, SaD posted the highest
voter turnout (65 percent) of any province in the country.
There were no major violations noted, though some citizens
were turned away because their names were not on the rolls
associated with their PDS (ration) cards. The reasons for
removal of some names was not clear. Early reports of
violence proved exaggerated, though one IP was killed by an
IED in Tuz Khormatu. END SUMMARY.

ELECTION AND SECURITY WELL-ORGANIZED

¶2. (SBU) PRT members visited polling sites in four of SaD's
eight districts. In Tuz they were accompanied by UNAMI
observers, and in Tikrit by Turkish observers. They found a
consistently positive atmosphere, with voters commenting
optimistically about the integrity of the process and the
importance of the election for the province. At nearly all
sites visited, poll workers followed similar procedures for
checking identification documents and distributing ballots.
The voters interviewed understood the procedures and were
confident about the secrecy of their vote. Political
representatives and independent observers were in place at
all the sites and reported no fraud or intimidation. The
Iraqi Police (IP) were deployed in force at all the polling
sites and maintained effective security cordons.

TURNOUT HIGH IN JUBOORI STRONGHOLD

¶3. (C) Voter turnout was very strong in al-Alam, the
powerbase of the Juboori tribe (largest in the province) and
hometown of Deputy Governor Abdullah Hussein Jebara
(reftels). When the PRT observer team visited two sites in
al-Alam beginning at 0930am, several hundred people had
already voted at each of the polling stations, and there were
long lines of people waiting to be processed by IP security.
Our locally employed interpreters who live in al-Alam were
confident enough of the security measures and conditions to
greet the PRT officers and embrace them publicly.

PROBLEMS

¶4. (SBU) At other sites visited, turnout was not as high.

Many voters, especially in rural areas, complained that they should be allowed to cast votes on behalf of female, elderly, or ailing relatives, whose identity cards they had brought. In Ad-Dawr, the observer team witnessed a man bring his wife into the same voting booth, appear to help her fill out her ballot, and then take both ballots (his and hers) to the ballot box. The director of the center said that this was acceptable.

¶5. (SBU) No special arrangements appeared to have been made for disabled voters. There were also some complaints that voters had to travel long distances from their homes to get to their voting centers. Some poll workers interviewed in the afternoon complained that IHEC was not taking care of them: they were without food or water all day. However, at one location, the IP officer in charge later contradicted this claim, saying IHEC had indeed brought food, though not Qthis claim, saying IHEC had indeed brought food, though not enough to feed everyone adequately. He said the local village mukhtar (municipality manager) had then provided a big lunch for everyone including the IPs.

¶6. (C) At least three centers in Tikrit were forced to turn away large numbers of voters because their names were missing from the registration lists associated with their PDS (ration) cards. Officials at the Al Nezamiya school in downtown Tikrit estimated that they had turned away approximately 30 percent of all voters who had arrived by early afternoon for this reason. Several citizens who were visibly upset approached the PRT observers to voice their frustration at not being allowed to vote. Officials at another center in the Khadamiya area of Tikrit gave PRT observers a similar account, estimating that they had turned

away over 30 families by early afternoon for this reason. Officials said that one reason for the missing names was simply that many eligible voters had not confirmed their names during the voter registration period. However, more suspiciously, officials at both sites told the PRT that IHEC had removed names from the original lists submitted by PDS agents. (Comment: in theory, voters did not need to confirm their names if they were to vote in their normal voting centers. The new registration was automatic based on PDS data. End Comment.)

SECURITY

¶7. (C) Security was generally very strong, with IA/IP checkpoints on routes leading to each center, around the center, and on the rooftops. At more than one center, IPs accompanied the PRT inside the center, but not inside the actual polling stations. IPs searched arriving citizens with varying degrees of thoroughness, in some cases with various technological aids. At some sites the PRT observers were searched, at others not. One site in al-Alam refused access to the observer team because the Close Protection (security) agent was carrying a sidearm. At some venues there were special tents set up for searching female voters.

¶8. (C) Early reports of attacks proved to be exaggerated: five reports of explosions in Tikrit turned out to refer to the same event, a small IED that caused no injuries. More seriously, a roadside bomb was detonated in Tuz Khormatu, killing one IP and wounding six Iraqis. None of the voting centers in SaD was damaged or closed due to the attack.

CROCKER